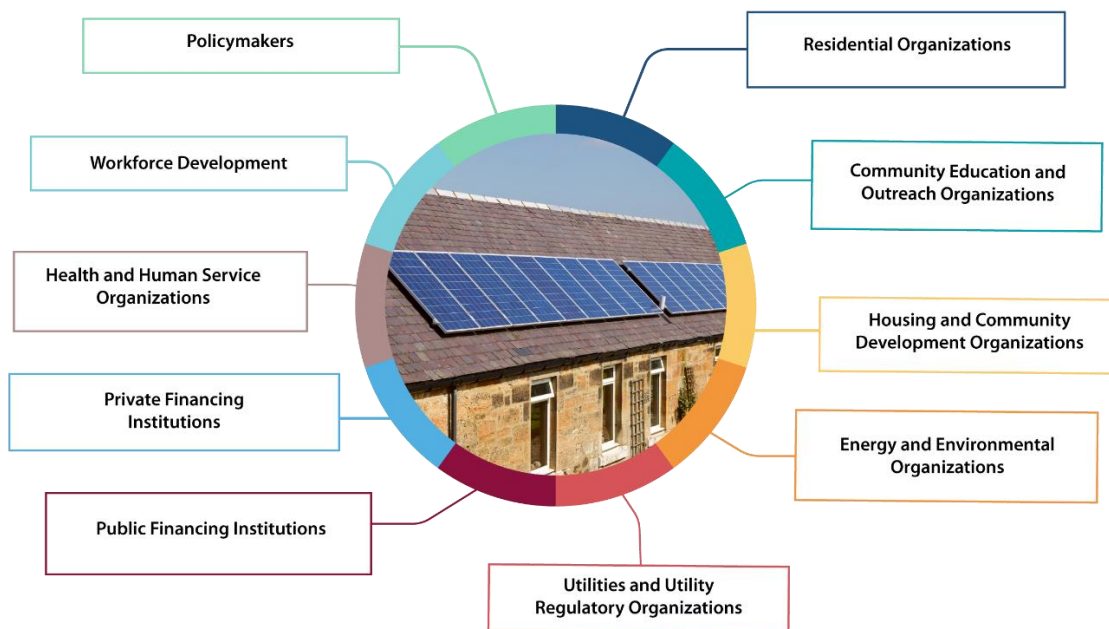


States, localities, and utilities in the Better Building’s [Clean Energy for Low Income Communities Accelerator](#) (CELICA) found as partners of the two-year Accelerator that engaging a wide variety of state and local organizations can advance their energy efficiency and renewable energy goals for low-income communities. Low-income energy efficiency and renewable energy programs (hereafter referred to as “low-income energy programs” or just “programs”) can involve broad engagement of diverse stakeholders during program design and implementation. The stakeholder groups detailed below (Figure 1) are commonly concerned with low-income household energy needs.

Figure 1: Key Stakeholders for Developing a Low-Income Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Program



For each stakeholder group, there are typically federal agencies and national groups with resources that state and local organizations can use to build stakeholder engagement activities. Many organizations have roles that cross categories of stakeholders (Figure 1). The following sections describe the unique interests and potential contributions of each stakeholder group.

Key Stakeholder Groups: Who They Are and Why Engage Them

Residential Organizations

Residential organizations often have a community’s best interest in mind because their members work and live within the community. When developing a low-income energy program, consider including the following groups as part of planning or outreach:

-
- ▶ Neighborhood groups (e.g., neighborhood associations, neighborhood block clubs)
 - ▶ Affinity groups (e.g., community gardening associations)

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Neighborhood groups are interested in improving the safety of a neighborhood and are interested in improving quality of life (e.g., lowering energy bills). Affinity groups give residents outlets for exploring shared interests, and certain groups may have an interest in bringing energy efficiency and renewable energy programs to their neighborhoods.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

Neighborhood and affinity groups know their community well and can provide ideas related to low-income energy program design or outreach. Ideally, they are engaged early in the design process. Before launching a program, solicit feedback from these groups on community needs and gaps as well as program design elements through meetings, interviews, and focus groups. Once buy-in is established through stakeholder engagement, these groups may be enlisted as ambassadors to increase awareness of program goals and increase individual support and participation in programs. These groups can help recruit participants for small-scale pilot projects or full-fledged programs. Among all stakeholder groups, residential organizations most closely represent the participants that are directly impacted by low-income energy programs.

Community Education and Outreach Organizations

Community education and outreach organizations are able to provide connections across multiple communities and can provide valuable insight into the design of low-income energy programs. The following groups can provide crucial assistance and foster connections when implementing a new low-income energy program:

- ▶ Various types of resident associations, such as senior citizen groups and parenting groups
- ▶ Environmental justice organizations, such as local affiliates of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and others that promote a clean environment and other benefits for those disproportionately impacted by pollution
- ▶ Faith-based organizations
- ▶ Community centers

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Community education and outreach organizations may be interested in equitable access to resources (e.g., funding for projects or jobs) and participation in stakeholder meetings and submissions for the public record. Faith-based organizations may be interested in environmental stewardship and open to participating in and promoting programs that help sustain a healthy and vibrant community. Some are concerned with providing jobs and resources to their members and to the broader community.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

If low-income energy programs can establish buy-in with these organizations, community education and outreach organizations can use their credibility and influence to build program quality and contribute to program design and efficacy. For example, community education organizations can help program leaders understand community history, needs, and sensitivities, and potentially help with marketing, outreach, and enrollment efforts. The organizations have relationships with local leaders, lawmakers, regulators, and media, making them powerful allies. These organizations also already have networks that can be leveraged to gather input and drive program participation. In addition, community organizations can garner support for efforts and gain access to pools of interested volunteers to advance their energy efficiency and renewable energy goals with low-income communities. By partnering with existing community and faith-based organizations, low-income energy program leaders can benefit from established communication channels that would take significant time and energy to develop on their own.

Housing and Community Development Organizations

Low-income energy residential energy programs that support residential buildings foster relationships with the following groups. These relationships can support development of more effective affordable housing strategy for low-income energy programs:

- ▶ State housing agencies
- ▶ Local public housing agencies (e.g., municipal, county)
- ▶ Nonprofit affordable housing groups
- ▶ Building developers
- ▶ Community development corporations

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Housing providers may be interested in lowering energy costs to make housing more affordable, improve community assets, and increase the number of tenants served by low-income energy programs. State housing agencies are interested in incentivizing better affordable housing projects as part of issuing federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and providing public grants to subsidize cost-saving energy upgrades to affordable housing. Local public housing agencies and nonprofit affordable housing groups use the same incentives and subsidies to implement energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and provide assistance to housing developers. Community development corporations are interested in increasing accessibility to affordable housing, and energy efficiency and renewable energy measures can reduce operations and maintenance costs as well as tenant utility bills.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

State housing agencies can provide incentives for building developers to incorporate energy efficiency and renewable energy into affordable housing. Public housing agencies and nonprofit affordable housing groups can offer a ready set of income-qualified program participants as well as a housing stock that is ready for upgrades to improve comfort, reduce operating expenses, and lower tenant bills. Community

development corporations can provide an understanding of existing and new community and economic development opportunities, which can influence program design, marketing, and integration of energy programs within broader community development efforts.

The [State of Massachusetts](#) offers a program that aligns energy audits and improvements with recapitalization or refinance cycles to leverage private capital for the greatest possible impact.

Energy and Environmental Organizations

Organizations that focus on energy and the environment often lead low-income energy programs or can provide valuable tools to expand low-income energy programs led by other organizations. The following groups can help connect programs to essential tools and resources for programs:

- ▶ State agencies
- ▶ Local government agencies
- ▶ Regional energy efficiency or renewable energy organizations, both private and non-profit (e.g., Southeast Efficient Energy Alliance)
- ▶ Nonprofit energy and environmental organizations that provide education and outreach and specialized services, including energy, water, and air pollution control, and public health issues (e.g., lead abatement)

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Weatherization agencies have a low-income energy affordability focus inherent to their program and have often operated such programs for decades, bringing extensive knowledge and experience to addressing low-income energy needs. In addition, state energy offices may have an interest in ensuring broad access to energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. Whether housed in the same agency or not, weatherization and state energy offices may find alignment between their missions and efforts to ensure that energy efficiency and renewable energy programs are equitably serving all residents. In addition, regional energy efficiency and renewable energy organizations are inherently interested in interstate collaboration between their members to share lessons and may partner to create innovative low-income energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. Nonprofit energy and environmental organizations often work to educate and offer energy-saving programs to low-income households, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses serving low-income communities.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

State weatherization offices are grantees of the DOE Weatherization Assistance Program and may also administer state weatherization funding as well as any weatherization funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, utility-funded energy efficiency programs, and other programs that serve low-income households. Regional energy efficiency and renewable energy organizations may offer direct connections to stakeholders who can be engaged for program design and development, leveraging funding, and partnerships. Successful or innovative programs may also be recognized or awarded, which may appeal to funders who can provide additional resources. Nonprofit organizations often have proven innovative models for engaging the community

around energy issues and can serve as liaisons between program developers, administrators and implementers, and the communities in which they will execute the program.

These agencies are often in a position to [Engage a Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Committee to Get Input on Program Barriers and Improve Low Income Program Design](#).

Utilities and Utility Regulatory Organizations

Utilities and utility regulatory organizations often have a public mandate to ensure all households have access to the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy as well as related programs they are contributing towards as customers (i.e., ratepayers). The following groups may be engaged in the development of a low-income energy program:

- ▶ Utility and public service commissions (regulators)
- ▶ Investor-owned utilities
- ▶ Publicly-owned utilities (municipal and cooperative)
- ▶ Consumer protection groups

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Utility and public service commissions are interested in balancing the interests of all customers they serve, which includes making sure that the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs reach all customers contributing to the costs of these programs. Both investor-owned utilities and publicly-owned utilities may be mandated by legislation to address low-income energy needs and are often seeking ways to reduce costs associated with low-income programs to ensure fair return on investment to customers. Low-income energy efficiency and renewable energy programs typically require greater incentives than market-rate programs to be effective given low-income consumers cannot typically afford the upfront cost of measures. Consumer protection groups are interested in promoting and protecting the interests of consumers who are paying to support low-income energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

Utility commissions may require that utilities attend meetings with stakeholders to gather input and that utilities provide particular education or programs that meet the needs of low-income communities. Investor-owned utilities and publicly-owned utilities that administer energy efficiency and renewable energy programs may be able to provide program strategies and data to improve program design and measurement of impact. Consumer protection groups may be able to provide pertinent information relating to equitable consumer practices and support the preservation of existing low-income energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

The CELICA [Colorado Case Study](#) describes how the Accelerator partners in the state engaged with their utilities to deliver a low-income community solar subscriber model. The State of Michigan provides an example of how [State Partnerships with Electric Cooperatives for Low-Income Community Solar and Weatherization](#) can address energy affordability for a utility's low-income customers.

Public Financing Institutions

Low-income energy programs may require capital to finance on-bill programs, multifamily retrofit projects, and home repair programs, among others. Public financing can provide critical underwriting for programs addressing underserved markets and can also be used to leverage private investment. Consider the following groups to assist with financing resources for a new or continuing low-income energy program:

- ▶ Housing finance agencies
- ▶ Economic development agencies
- ▶ Public finance authorities (e.g., Green Banks)
- ▶ Rural development agencies

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Public finance agencies are state and local entities vested with the ability to issue tax-exempt and taxable bonds that benefit the residents of the community through job creation, economic development, and housing opportunities. Energy efficiency and renewable energy deployment aligns with the critical interests of public finance agencies insofar as it results in public benefits to the area it serves. Many successful state-based energy efficiency and renewable energy financing programs are created by, housed at, or otherwise partnered with public finance agencies. For example, Green Banks are often public-private partnerships within a state's economic development authority.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

An energy efficiency and renewable energy program can look to public finance agencies to provide capitalization funds or specific financial expertise needed to create a viable energy efficiency and renewable energy lending program or other financing mechanism. Public financing providers may offer infrastructure for program operations, underwriting expertise, and safeguards to protect borrowers. A public finance entity may provide insight about lending to different market sectors as well as access to federal or other resources for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development is an example of [Incorporating Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Standards as a Criterion in Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Applications](#).

Private Financing Institutions

Private financing institutions, including the following groups, can help provide additional funding sources for low-income energy programs where needed and appropriate:

- ▶ Foundations (national and local)
- ▶ Lending institutions: community development financial institutions (CDFIs), private banks, credit unions

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

The interests of private sector financing stakeholders, such as foundations, vary widely and may include affordable housing, environmental objectives, and economic development. Banks and other lending institutions may be looking to diversify their portfolios, expand their lending offerings, or provide a benefit to the communities they serve (e.g., in compliance with the Community Reinvestment Act).

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

Foundations may provide grants or below-market loans (through their program-related investment divisions) to support programs that advance their mission. They may consider social impact investing, or “pay for success” models, where upfront investment offers a tangible savings to public benefit programs (or return on resources or investment), such as healthcare cost savings to Medicaid participants from home health and safety improvements. Getting early support from local foundations can help attract other types of investment, financial and otherwise. These groups are often well respected in their communities and can help bring other key stakeholders into the process. Funding sources can be utilized in a complementary manner to create additional value. For example, foundation funds may provide grant dollars that can reduce the administrative costs of a lending program or mitigate some of the risks inherent to lending to higher risk populations (e.g., creating a loan loss reserve). These capital cost reductions or reductions to investment risk may increase the interest and participation of a private bank in an energy efficiency and renewable energy financing program. In addition, private institutions often have large and sustainable pools of capital. Their resources often exceed that of state funding.

The CELICA [Connecticut Case Study](#) provides an in-depth look at how state-level public financing can leverage private investment and support energy affordability for low-income households.

Health and Human Service Organizations

Health and human service organizations are focused on meeting the basic needs of low-income households, which include reducing energy burden and addressing health and safety concerns that may be present in the home. Depending on the focus, low-income energy programs often benefit from engagement of the following types of organizations:

- ▶ State health and human service agencies
- ▶ Local community action agencies and human service providers
- ▶ Local healthcare providers (healthcare systems, hospitals, and community health centers)

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Health and human service agencies serve many basic needs of low-income residents and act as a safety net. State agencies may be concerned with how energy efficiency programs can help facilitate meeting federal and state regulations for encouraging healthcare systems to do more to address chronic illness (e.g., asthma). Local agencies and healthcare providers may be interested in learning how to bridge public health and energy efficiency initiatives to realize non-energy benefits, such as improved indoor air quality, that have ripple effects on overall public health.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

State Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program grantees administer federal and state energy bill assistance and may transfer up to 15% of funds (or 25% with a federal waiver) to the agency responsible for administering the Weatherization Assistance Program Grant. Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program weatherization funding may be used for weatherization or other energy-related home repair for low-income households. Local community action and human service agencies may administer wraparound services to help residents remain financially stable; some may also administer programs like Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program weatherization. Local healthcare providers can help design solutions that fit the unique needs of the communities they serve and also act as a conduit for program promotion and enrollment. Through healthy homes initiatives, state Medicaid and healthcare providers may fund activities to address low-income household health and safety issues. This activity also allows more homes to receive energy efficiency services.

The CELICA [Issue Brief: Promising Examples of Integrated Energy Efficiency and Health Services for Low-income Households](#) features examples from the states of Connecticut and Washington and how state public health, energy, and other agencies are collaborating to address access to energy efficiency.

Workforce Development Organizations

Low-income energy programs bring job opportunities to a community through energy efficiency and renewable energy work. The following groups can help ensure the local workforce and small businesses have the skills and capacity to capture economic opportunities:

- ▶ State, regional, and local economic development entities
- ▶ State and local workforce board and agencies
- ▶ Community colleges
- ▶ Skilled trades and apprenticeship programs
- ▶ Nonprofit community-based job training organizations

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Economic development entities and workforce boards or agencies are interested in community economic and environmental resiliency; therefore, efforts to support local businesses and develop pathways to gainful employment, especially in economically disadvantaged areas, resonate with this group. Community colleges are interested in partnering with organizations who provide their students with job skills, including in the energy efficiency and renewable energy sector. Skilled trades and apprenticeship programs and nonprofit community-based job training organizations are interested in training and deploying workers for jobs related to energy efficiency and renewable energy equipment installation.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

Economic development entities and workforce boards and agencies are powerful allies who can help leverage funding and relationships for jobs that support energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. Community colleges can help forecast sector job growth, including identifying the skills that will be needed for future job seekers. Skilled trades and apprenticeship programs and nonprofit community-based job

training organizations can help train and mentor skilled workers and entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities and connect them to jobs and projects that become available through energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

Policymakers

[CELICA partners](#) found that developing relationships with and informing the following entities that create and implement policy can significantly impact a low-income energy program:

- ▶ **State:** elected officials
- ▶ **Local:** county and municipal elected officials (council members, aldermen, mayors)

What is their interest in low-income energy programs?

Policies are developed, adopted, and implemented at the state and local levels. Policymakers are involved in crafting rules that impact low-income energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

What can they contribute to low-income energy program development?

The support of state and local elected officials is crucial to expanding access to energy efficiency and renewable energy for low-income residents.

In Illinois, the work to [Bring Together a Diverse Coalition of Stakeholders to Advance Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Solutions for All](#) is one example of how local and state level organizations engaged policymakers to develop low-income energy programs.

Taking the Next Step

For more information on engaging stakeholders in the planning and implementation of low-income energy programs, see the [Stakeholder Engagement Section](#) of the [CELICA Toolkit](#).